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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/46/370 and 377; A/C.5/46/2, A/C.5/46/4 and Add.1, A/C.5/46/7, A/C.5/46/9, A/C.5/46/13, A/C.5/46/16 and A/C.5/46/21)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT (continued)

(b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS (continued)

(c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

1. Mr. SAHU (India) said that if the Organization was to face the challenges before it, it must recruit, motivate and retain the best available staff and ensure that their skills were developed and adapted to changing requirements. Such considerations were particularly important now that the role of the United Nations in international affairs had expanded and diversified. From a purely budgetary point of view, it was also in the collective interest of Member States for staff productivity to increase and, through the introduction of new technologies, for the Organization to become more cost-effective.

2. The primary considerations in recruiting staff were competence and efficiency, with due respect for the principle of equitable geographical representation. Nationals of all Member States must be included in the Secretariat.

3. His delegation noted the increase in the number of unrepresented States with the accession of seven new Members. It also noted that, at the regional level, there had been a reduction in the number of overrepresented States and that the percentage of staff from developing countries in posts subject to geographical distribution had marginally increased, as had the percentage of such staff at the D-1 level and above, although there had been a decline in the percentage at the D-2 level and above.

4. When the current desirable ranges had been established in 1987, the weight of the population factor had been reduced from 7.2 per cent to 5 per cent. General Assembly resolution 42/220 had, however, provided that consideration would be given to raising the weight of the population factor at the next review, which was to take place at the current session. The reduction in the weight of the population factor to 5 per cent had done an injustice to Member States with large populations and his delegation sought a restoration of the weight to 7.2 per cent. In that connection, the Committee would note that the weight allotted to the population factor had been as high as 8.7 per cent in 1977.

5. The number of posts subject to geographical distribution accounted for less than 10 per cent of the total. Efforts should be made to apply the

(Mr. Sahu, India)

principle of geographical distribution to other staff, in particular, to the Field Service and General Service categories and to extrabudgetary posts. He requested a breakdown by nationality of staff in those categories and asked whether the criteria applied for the creation of extrabudgetary posts differed from those used in respect of regular budget posts.

6. He welcomed the progress made in increasing the number of women in geographical posts. It appeared that the target of 35 per cent would perhaps be met by 1995, although more efforts were needed with regard to posts at the D-1 level and above. His delegation also welcomed the development of proposals on a career development system, and the steps being taken to improve mobility and provide greater training opportunities.

7. His delegation had noted the comments by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management that the level of staffing required for the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia exceeded the capacity of the Secretariat and the United Nations system. His Government was prepared to provide personnel for such operations. Lastly, his delegation was concerned at the increasing threat to the safety and security of United Nations staff, and supported the steps being taken by the Secretary-General to ensure adequate security for all staff members.

AGENDA ITEM 104: FINANCIAL REPORTS AND AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND REPORTS OF THE BOARD OF AUDITORS (continued) (A/46/404 and A/46/601)

8. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the budget of the United Nations was currently implemented over a 24-month period, at the end of which valid obligations could be retained for an additional 12 months. Under financial regulation 4.4, at the end of that 12-month period the Secretary-General was required to cancel any obligations which had not been discharged, or to transfer any obligations which remained valid as obligations against current appropriations.

9. That procedure had been established before the introduction of the new budgetary process, the main elements of which were the contingency fund and the outline. Under the current procedure, the Secretariat, on its own initiative, had converted obligations which remained valid at the end of the 12-month period into accounts payable, with the result that they remained valid beyond 12 months.

10. The Board of Auditors had questioned the practice and called for strict adherence to financial regulation 4.4. The Advisory Committee had considered the problem at the forty-fifth session and had called for the amendment of financial regulation 4.4 to take account of the new budgetary regime. In resolution 45/235, however, the General Assembly had indicated that the Secretary-General must comply fully with regulation 4.4. In order to do that, the Secretary-General would need to cancel valid obligations at the end of the

(Mr. Mselle)

12-month period, which would raise the question of where the resources would come from to discharge those obligations.

11. Under the previous budgetary process the Secretary-General could charge valid obligations against current appropriations, but under the new procedure any additions other than those in respect of inflation or currency fluctuations must come from the contingency fund. It had, however, never been the intention for that fund to cover cancelled obligations. That was why the Advisory Committee had proposed that financial regulation 4.4 should be amended, a proposal which the Fifth Committee had not accepted.

12. The report of the Secretary-General on the question of unliquidated obligations (A/46/404) represented an attempt to address the issue, but the Advisory Committee, in its own report (A/46/601), had concluded that it was unable to support any of the Secretary-General's proposals, although he, personally, was not in agreement with that conclusion. Given the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/235, the Advisory Committee's hands had been tied.

13. The issue was a technical one and should be solved accordingly. The problem before the Fifth Committee was whether to extend the period granted to the Secretary-General to discharge valid obligations from 12 months to some longer period such as 24 months. The Committee would note that the 12-month period had been established when the Organization was still using an annual, rather than a biennial budget period. It seemed appropriate for the period to be extended to 24 months to allow the Secretariat more latitude in discharging obligations. Furthermore, the Fifth Committee must decide whether it was appropriate to make use of the contingency fund to discharge valid obligations which were to be cancelled. His own view was that such obligations should not be chargeable to the contingency fund. They should, rather, be absorbed, and in the report of the Secretary-General the Secretariat had indicated areas in which it had managed to do that. Where they could not be absorbed, they needed to be covered under current appropriations, but in no circumstances should they be charged against the contingency fund.

14. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that the suggestion in paragraph 12 (a) of the Secretary-General's report (A/46/404) that funds appropriated in respect of multiyear projects could be placed in a separate account, which would allow unexpended balances to be carried forward into succeeding bienniums until projects were completed, appeared to offer a satisfactory solution.

15. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that activities which lent themselves to a multiyear approach were essentially capital expenditures under section 35. The Secretariat endorsed the solution to the problem of unliquidated obligations suggested by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

16. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that the Committee should endorse the explanation provided by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

17. Mr. MORDACQ (France) asked whether the procedure outlined in paragraph 12 (a) of the Secretary-General's report (A/46/404) could in fact be applied to all budget sections and whether the General Assembly would decide what constituted multi-year expenditures. If that procedure, which was currently limited to section 35 of the proposed programme budget, was followed more widely, there would surely be no need for selective waiving of financial regulation 4.4, as suggested in paragraph 12 (b) of the report. The Secretary-General's two suggestions did not appear to be complementary and the recommendation made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee seemed very sensible in the context of biennial budgets.

18. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee was not in favour of establishing a large number of separate accounts under different budget sections and designating the funds for multi-year projects. Virtually any activity, such as training or procurement, could be described as being of a multi-year nature and the respective funds might then be retained indefinitely. The procedure described in paragraph 12 (a) of the Secretary-General's report currently related to a few specific projects - for example, the construction projects at Addis Ababa and Bangkok and the Integrated Management Information System - which involved large funds and had clearly defined time periods, often three to five years. The authorization to maintain a separate account lapsed when the project was completed. As the arrangement suggested in paragraph 12 (a) would be open-ended, the Advisory Committee could not endorse it. The suggestion in paragraph 12 (b) could be implemented by extending the time-limit stipulated in regulation 4.3 to 24 months, thus affording the necessary flexibility to the Secretary-General.

19. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said he wished to stress that only a few projects under section 35 were funded from multi-year accounts. Increasing the number of such accounts would be detrimental to the concept of biennial budgets.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued) (A/46/6/Rev.1 and A/46/7)

AGENDA ITEM 108: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/46/16 and Add.1, A/46/173 and A/46/330)

First reading (continued)

Section 14. Department of Technical Cooperation for Development

20. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), referring to paragraphs 14.5 and 14.6 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 (A/46/6/Rev.1), said that it was difficult to anticipate how the changes in the system of support costs reimbursement would affect the functions, operations and resources of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development. In all likelihood, 1991 would be a transitional year and the

(Mr. Baudot)

real effects of the changes would not be felt until 1993. With reference to paragraph 14.34, he added that the reformulated narrative of programme 21, Public administration and finance, of the medium-term plan had been submitted to the Second Committee but no comments had yet been received.

21. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said his delegation believed that the proposed real growth rate of 0.1 per cent under section 14 was high, given the past contributions of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development in providing technical assistance to developing countries. The Department's budget was but a fraction of the total resources devoted by the United Nations system and the international community as a whole to technical assistance activities. It would be useful for the Committee to be provided with a table showing the level of resources which each agency and programme allocated for that purpose. The table should include both assessed and voluntary expenditures and expenditures by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

22. As for the role of the Department in the United Nations system, his delegation believed that its work essentially duplicated services provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in particular the Office for Projects Services, for which the level of resources had increased dramatically in recent years while resources provided to the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development from extrabudgetary sources had declined substantially. His delegation therefore doubted whether there was a compelling case to be made for the continued operation of the Department and hoped that its future role would be addressed by the new Secretary-General in the context of restructuring.

23. It would appear from the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7, para. 14.4) that, despite a significant drop in the level of operational activities to be undertaken, the administrative overheads associated with such activities would increase. The Secretariat suggested that the impact of the changes in support costs arrangements on the level of administrative support staff funded through extrabudgetary resources was unclear. It was his delegation's understanding that those changes would result in a decrease in administrative support staff financed by the Department and was therefore troubled by the Secretariat's apparent uncertainty on that matter. It hoped that ACABQ would keep a close watch on the situation and apprise the Fifth Committee of any developments.

24. The proposed programme budget indicated that almost 90 per cent of the Department's resources during 1992-1993 would be provided from extrabudgetary resources, while almost half of its total staffing would be paid for from the regular budget. His delegation would like to know why the assessed budget was required to support such a large number of posts when most of the Department's resources were provided by other United Nations agencies and programmes.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the recommendation of the Committee for

(The Chairman)

Programme and Coordination (CPC) on section 14, as contained in paragraph 238 of its report (A/46/16).

26. It was so decided.

27. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $27,632,400 under section 14 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 14 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 15. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

28. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that there would be a decrease of two posts from 1991 under section 15 as a result of the abolition of one P-3 post under programme support and one D-2 post under programme 13, subprogramme 5. The abolition of the latter post was to be explained by the evolution of the programme of work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and reflected developments in trade among countries having different economic and social systems.

29. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee indicated in its report (A/46/7, para. 15.3) that it did not understand the rationale by which it was proposed to abolish a D-2 post and redeploy the other posts in programme 13, subprogramme 5. The Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division had just given some explanation for that proposal. The Advisory Committee believed that additional savings were possible, particularly in respect of the requirements for consultants and ad hoc expert groups. It did not question the necessity for appropriate provision for those services but noted that resources for consultants and ad hoc expert groups were in many cases not related to projects that would be implemented as indicated in the budget document, and were treated instead as contingency provisions. Some savings should, in addition, be possible in external printing and expenditure for supplies and materials.

30. As stated in paragraph 15.10 of its report, the Advisory Committee had been informed that an amount equivalent to $62,200 at 1992-1993 rates for representation by the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) had inadvertently been retained in the provision for representation of national liberation movements at UNCTAD meetings. That amount should therefore be deleted from the budget estimate.

31. Ms. BERENGUER (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said that in CPC a number of delegations had questioned the negative rate of growth and the proposed abolition of posts under section 15, as indicated in the Committee's report (A/46/16). The Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division had explained the rationale for the post reductions and had given assurances on the question of redeployment. CPC had made no specific

(Ms. Berenguer)

recommendations on the staffing table but had recalled that the decision regarding the proposed reduction of posts under section 15 fell within the competence of the General Assembly.

32. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, expressed concern about the negative 0.5 per cent rate of growth calculated for section 15 at a time when international trade was proving to be an effective means for the development of the developing countries. UNCTAD had an important role to play in that regard, especially through its activities relating to trade facilitation, external financing and international monetary issues and the debt and development problems of developing countries. The level of resources provided to UNCTAD should correspond to the increasing responsibilities it would be called upon to assume, notably in the light of the Conference to be held at Cartagena.

33. With regard to the Advisory Committee's recommendation of a 10 per cent reduction in respect of consultants and ad hoc expert groups, he said that the proposals should be considered in detail since UNCTAD had very limited budgetary resources for permanent staff. Moreover, new technologies needed to be adopted to ensure the improved functioning of the Conference.

34. Lastly, the medium-term plan indicated priorities with regard to development, especially in the developing countries. In that regard, the Rio Group felt that the Secretary-General's submission was not quite in conformity with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

35. Mr. ZARI-ZARRE (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, with its many development-related programmes, UNCTAD was vital to the development of the developing countries, one of the main priorities for the biennium 1992-1993. The priority nature of the programmes, not past experience, should be the main factor in determining resource allocations under section 15, especially with regard to the funding of consultants and ad hoc expert groups. His delegation therefore could not support the minus 0.5 rate of growth proposed for that section.

36. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Twelve States members of the European Community, said that they recognized the major importance of UNCTAD within the United Nations system and appreciated the significant contribution it had made in recent years to international thinking on major themes. They recalled the provisions of resolution 45/203, in which the General Assembly invited UNCTAD and the Trade and Development Board to continue to follow closely and to analyse developments that had a major impact on international trade relations, and they encouraged the UNCTAD secretariat to increase its collaboration with the Secretariat, in particular with the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Economic Commission for Europe. They also recognized the responsibility given to UNCTAD for the implementation of the programme of action of the Paris Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

(Mr. Spaans, Netherlands)

37. Because of the new mandates and increased workload of UNCTAD, the Twelve had accepted the allocation of additional resources to the relevant section of the regular budget for the biennium 1990-1991. However, even at that time, it had been suggested in the statement of programme budget implications that resources might be provided through redeployment from the subprogramme on trade among countries having different economic and social systems. As the Secretariat now considered that subprogramme obsolete, it had eliminated one post and redeployed all the others. Like ACABQ, the Twelve found that the presentation of section 15 made it difficult to analyse those redeployments or to understand the rationale for them. They would be grateful if the Secretariat would provide justification for the proposed redeployments for consideration by the Committee in informal consultations. They also wished to know whether any of the posts concerned were currently vacant and what other vacancies there were in the UNCTAD secretariat.

38. Mr. BIDNY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that programme 13, subprogramme 5, Trade among countries having different economic and social systems, should be reoriented to reflect the transitional state of the Eastern European economies and to achieve better linkage with other programmes. The economic changes under way in Eastern Europe called for more, not fewer, staff who were well versed in that area. For that reason, his delegation did not understand why posts were being eliminated under that heading. As the representative of the Netherlands had stated, it was difficult to understand the Secretariat's rationale for the changes, and he hoped that clarification would be provided during informal consultations.

39. Mr. LEV (Israel) wished to place on record the reservations of his delegation with respect to the allocation of resources under programme 15, subprogramme 2, Assistance to the Palestinian people, as those activities served no useful purpose.

40. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that his delegation had hoped that the deletion from the agenda of the Trade and Development Board of the item on trade among countries having different economic and social systems would result in a much greater reduction in appropriations for UNCTAD. UNCTAD activities in general appeared to place too much emphasis on "East-South" issues in general, and he would like to know whether the changes in the structures of the Eastern European economies were fully reflected in all its programmes of work.

41. Substantial savings could be achieved through the revision of programme 13, subprogramme 4, Transfer of technology. The constraints on the transfer of technology perceived by the secretariat of UNCTAD and some of the States members of UNCTAD were not consistent with the substantial transfer of technology to developing countries that had taken place over the past 30 years. In that regard, his delegation saw no benefit to be gained from the convening of a United Nations conference on the transfer of technology. It also thought that 15 of the 17 publications proposed under the subprogramme were unnecessary and would like to know the amount of resources, in terms of

(Mr. Cohen, United States)

staff and consultants, that would be allocated to their production. Finally, UNCTAD might wish to examine the very effective role played by educational institutions - such as those of the United States - in transferring technology to the developing world.

42. Consideration of finance matters should be left to the international financial institutions which had the legal mandate and the technical competence to deal with them. UNCTAD should limit itself to providing a forum for the discussion of debt issues and should not try to develop alternative debt strategies. His delegation was particularly concerned about references in the proposed programme budget to the elaboration of a growth-oriented strategy (A/46/6/Rev.1, para. 15.68), since the international debt strategy was already in place and was working effectively. It hoped that, in the future, the work programme of UNCTAD would include more activities relating to the role of Government reforms in the improvement of trade and development. The elimination of Government corruption would go a long way towards improving economic conditions in many countries.

43. Given the substantial proportion of the work programmes devoted to the preparation of recurrent and non-recurrent publications, his delegation wondered whether UNCTAD had conducted any in-house surveys of the end-users or of the quality and usefulness of its publications. If so, it hoped that the results would be shared with the Committee. It also wished to record its reservations concerning the activities referred to in paragraph 15.93 relating to assistance to the Palestinian people. While the United States supported the efforts of United Nations programmes such as the United Nations Development Programme in that area, it did not believe that the work of UNCTAD would result in any tangible gains for the Palestinians.

44. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) expressed his support for the statement made by the representative of Colombia. His delegation assigned high priority to the activities of UNCTAD and was very concerned about the cuts proposed under section 15, particularly the abolition of posts. Also, some of the suggested post redeployments looked like a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. It did not agree with the Advisory Committee's application of a zero-based approach to appropriations for consultants and ad hoc expert groups, which should, in its view, be determined by programme content. Those issues should be discussed in informal consultations.

45. Uganda obviously attached great importance to programme 15, subprogramme 2, as it concerned land-locked and island developing countries. In view of the emphasis placed by the General Assembly on reversing the marginalization of such countries, and since UNCTAD was the principal organization involved in that field, the subprogramme should be further strengthened - for example, by the redeployment of posts. More resources should also be devoted to programme 15, subprogramme 1, Least developed countries.

46. With the forthcoming eighth session of UNCTAD, new mandates were

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

possible, and he hoped that they would be taken into consideration in the revision of the medium-term plan. He did not agree with the United States representative that the consideration of debt issues should be left to the international financial institutions. From the standpoint of the developing countries, UNCTAD provided a more objective analysis.

47. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) referred to the negative special adjustment made to reflect the phasing out of activities in respect of Namibia, mentioned in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the report of ACABQ (A/46/7). He wondered whether the same type of adjustment had been made for programme 13, subprogramme 5, which was also being terminated. If not, subtracting the resources formerly earmarked for that subprogramme from the base should result in a sizeable real growth rate; the calculated rate of minus 0.5 was thus misleading.

48. With respect to the statement of ACABQ in paragraph 15.3 of its report that it did not understand the rationale for the proposed abolition of one D-2 post and the redeployment of all the other posts under programme 13, subprogramme 5, he said that his delegation understood the Advisory Committee's point of view. However, given the growing trade gap, it favoured strengthening the activities of UNCTAD, and it would appreciate a formal reply from the Secretariat regarding its negative growth calculation.

49. Mr. RAE (India) said that his delegation was surprised to note the proposed negative growth rate for section 15. UNCTAD played an important role in one of the General Assembly's five broad priority areas: the development of the developing countries. Moreover, the eighth session of UNCTAD, to be held in February 1992, was likely to lead to an increase in its activities. In that light, it was difficult to understand the proposed abolition of a D-2 post under programme 13, subprogramme 5. That question should be discussed in informal consultations.

50. His delegation agreed with the view expressed by ACABQ in paragraph 15.7 of its report that all requests for resources for consultants and ad hoc groups should be fully justified. However, in view of the technical subjects to be discussed at the eighth session of UNCTAD, it did not think that a zero-based approach should be applied. In general, since substantial cuts had already been made by the Secretariat under section 15, it would not be a good idea to reduce appropriations under that expenditure section still further.

51. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that, with respect to the abolition of the D-2 post under programme 13, subprogramme 5, it was necessary to look at that proposal in the much larger context of the total number of existing and proposed new D-2 posts. Moreover, while the subprogramme in question had been abolished, no decision had yet been made as to what, if anything, would replace it. The posts redeployed from that subprogramme had been allocated to five subprogrammes in programme 13 and two subprogrammes in programme 14. As for the vacancy rates at UNCTAD, there were currently two vacancies at the Professional level, none at the General Service level and none at the D-2 level. He hoped to be able

(Mr. Baudot)

to give more useful information on the averages for 1991 or the biennium 1990-1991 during informal consultations and would be happy to provide fuller information on any of the aforementioned subjects at the same time.

52. In response to the query from the representative of Japan, he said that the growth rate of minus 0.1 per cent had been calculated according to the traditional methodology, which meant that the funds set aside for programme 13, subprogramme 5, had not been deducted from the base. It was not his place to respond to the concern of the representative of India regarding the application of the zero-based approach; that would be an excellent subject for the proposed ad hoc technical seminar. He agreed that it would be a good practice to justify requests for resources for consultants.

53. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the conclusion and recommendation of CPC on section 15, as contained in paragraphs 247 and 248 of its report (A/46/16).

54. It was so decided.

55. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $90,232,000 under section 15 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 15 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 16: International Trade Centre

56. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said he thought that the Committee should explore the actual governance of the International Trade Centre, either during its consideration of the proposed programme budget or under agenda item 111 on administrative and budgetary coordination. Also, he would like an explanation of why the general budget reductions had not been applied to section 16.

57. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the recommendation of CPC on section 16, as contained in paragraph 253 of its report (A/46/16).

58. It was so decided.

59. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $17,916,200 under section 16 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 16 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 17: United Nations Environment Programme

60. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) expressed regret that the report of the Secretary-General on conference servicing

relating to United Nations intergovernmental bodies convened in Nairobi, requested by CPC (A/46/16, para. 263), was not yet issued, having only just been completed. He hoped that the Committee could nevertheless proceed with the first reading of section 17.

61. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee noted in its report (A/46/7, para. 17.4) the magnitude of the estimate for the trust funds enumerated in table 17.12 of the proposed programme budget, including the Trust Fund for the Interim Multilateral Fund under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Advisory Committee hoped that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) would be adequately reimbursed for the services which it rendered to that particular Fund.

62. The Advisory Committee also noted, in paragraph 17.7 of its report, that the Secretary-General's estimate for the non-recurrent provision for a special session of the Governing Council of UNEP in 1992 should be reduced, in view of the Governing Council's decision to shorten the session from five to three days. The Advisory Committee did not recommend approval of the new P-4 post proposed in paragraph 17.46 of the proposed programme budget because the Governing Council of UNEP had asked for an assessment of the management and organization of the Programme, and the Committee considered that the results of the assessment should be available before the post was approved. The Advisory Committee also urged, in paragraph 17.10 of its report, that the travel activities of the Environment Fund should be monitored carefully in view of the substantial increase under that object of expenditure in the proposed programme budget.

65. Ms. BERENGUER (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said that the Committee had experienced considerable difficulty with section 17, in particular in obtaining information from UNEP. It had reconfirmed all the recommendations contained in the report of its previous session because it was not clear whether they had been implemented. It had also requested supplementary information. The Committee therefore recommended approval of the programme narrative in section 17 on the understanding that all non-mandated activities would be excluded from that narrative.

64. Mr. ZONGWE MITONGA M'PUILUA (Zaire) said that, on behalf of the French-speaking countries, he wished to raise the question of interpretation services for UNEP. That problem had already been raised at the latest sessions of the Economic and Social Council and of CPC, which had subsequently requested the Secretary-General to submit the report on the conference servicing of United Nations intergovernmental bodies convened in Nairobi mentioned by the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division.

65. It was regrettable that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 made no provision for interpretation services for the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi, even though that body played an essential part in UNEP affairs and had become increasingly important since the

(Mr. Zongwe Mitonga M'Puilua, Zaire)

Governing Council had begun to meet biennially. Official languages must enjoy equal treatment and it was unacceptable for subsidiary bodies which performed essential work not to have interpretation services. If the current practice continued, the principle of the equal treatment of all official languages, reaffirmed by the General Assembly in resolution 42/207, would be jeopardized. UNEP had requested interpretation services to improve the quality and effectiveness of its work and had specifically raised the possibility of having its own interpretation service. He was well aware of the budgetary implications of that request, but the principle of the equal treatment of languages within the United Nations was inviolable. Moreover, the environment was one of the five priorities established for the coming biennium. The Committee should therefore not be afraid to provide enough resources under section 17 for environmental work to be carried out in the best possible conditions. The Advisory Committee recommended substantial savings under section 17, including a reduction in the estimates for conference services for the special session of the UNEP Governing Council in 1992. Perhaps the resources thus saved could be used to meet the request for interpretation services.

66. In view of the international importance of environmental issues, he wondered whether the United Nations had been wrong in deciding that sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP should be held only every two years. Perhaps it was time to review a decision that had been taken before environmental issues had become so important and revert to holding annual sessions of the Governing Council.

67. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of having a permanent interpretation team, based perhaps in Addis Ababa and working for the Economic Commission for Africa, which could travel to Nairobi as necessary, in particular for UNEP. General Assembly resolution 45/248 B had requested the Secretary-General to make proposals in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 on the improvement of conference services in the Economic Commission for Africa, including the provision of a permanent staff for interpretation. The report of the Secretary-General on that matter (A/C.5/46/19), however, did not provide information about the optimum use of such a staff of interpreters, if indeed it was established. He therefore requested the Secretariat to prepare a financial study on the implications of such a solution, taking into account the resulting savings in mission expenses and the income that would be earned by hiring out interpretation services to African bodies.

68. Ms. SHITAKHA (Kenya) said that her delegation supported the modest 4.5 per cent growth rate in section 17, given the priority of environmental issues. It had no objection to the use of extrabudgetary resources, but was concerned that, according to paragraph 17.6 of the proposed programme budget, some 93.7 per cent of the UNEP programme of work would depend on such resources. Another concern was the apparent lack of appropriate management control over the use of trust funds, and her delegation therefore supported the Advisory Committee's comment in paragraph 17.6 of its report (A/46/7).

(Mr. Shitakha, Kenya)

69. With regard to the Zairian representative's remarks about conference-servicing facilities in Nairobi, her delegation awaited the report of the Secretary-General with interest and would not be convinced by any argument that resources were not available. Nor could it support the suggestion that UNEP might rely on a permanent interpretation service based in Addis Ababa and assigned as necessary to the Economic Commission for Africa.

70. Her delegation could not support the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 17.9 of its report (A/46/7), against approval of a new P-4 post pending the outcome of the assessment requested by the Governing Council of UNEP, because such reports sometimes did not appear. It therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposal. In conclusion, in view of the anticipated increase in UNEP activities after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, it believed that the proposals under section 17 could only be regarded as provisional.

71. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that the extrabudgetary resources estimated in the budget for UNEP for the next biennium implied a very substantial increase over current levels. His delegation hoped, but was not convinced, that the increased level would be attained. The staffing table indicated that UNEP would finance three high-level posts from regular budget resources. In view of the required 25 per cent reduction in such posts, his delegation believed that more efforts should be made to streamline senior level management in the UNEP programme.

72. Section 17 included funding for the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which had been in existence for many years. His delegation wished to know what it had achieved in that time and thought that it might be worth considering merging its work with that of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It might be time for the General Assembly to consider taking action on that matter, an issue which should be discussed during informal consultations on the budget.

73. Because almost all the activities to be undertaken by UNEP would be financed from extrabudgetary resources, the Fifth Committee's role in assessing section 17 was limited. His delegation had doubts, however, about the planned production of so many publications and would like an estimate from the Secretariat of the number of copies of each that would be issued. It also wondered if the Secretariat had considered the environmental impact of such a high level of production, and whether UNEP was engaged in any programme for recyling paper. Too large a share of United Nations resources was devoted to publications and his delegation did not think that Member States gained much from such activities. It would therefore like an informal document from the Secretariat indicating all the publications to be produced by the United Nations during the biennium 1992-1993. Presented in tabular form, with an indication of the number of recurrent, non-recurrent and technical publications to be issued for each budget section, such information would be useful for the informal consultations on the budget.

74. Mr. ZARI-ZARRE (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that environmental problems were a major concern for the international community and one of the priorities for the proposed programme budget. His delegation therefore believed that more resources should be allocated to environmental programmes. In particular, in view of the environmental disaster caused by the Gulf war, it hoped that efforts would be made to reinforce the UNEP regional office at Bahrain.

75. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that the importance of UNEP made it imperative to provide adequately for the programmes mandated for the biennium 1992-1993. As the representative of Kenya had said, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would result in an increased workload for UNEP. Provision should therefore be made for better conference services in Nairobi. Despite the high level of extrabudgetary resources estimated in the proposed programme budget, more resources should be allocated to UNEP under the regular budget during the coming biennium.

76. Mr. MORDACQ (France) endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Zaire concerning the importance of providing interpretation services for UNEP. His delegation supported the request made by UNEP for estimates to be included in the proposed programme budget for that purpose, and regretted that the report on conference servicing in Nairobi requested by CPC was still not available. It was difficult to discuss, and to take a decision on, section 17 without the benefit of that report.

77. In view of the growing importance of environmental problems, the Advisory Committee's proposals for reductions of over 3 per cent in the Secretary-General's estimates for section 17 were surprising. The section merited serious consideration. In particular, the Governing Council of UNEP and the Permanent Representative Committee must have the facilities to work to a high standard. The decision to hold sessions of the Governing Council biennially might have been a mistake and the possibility of reverting to annual sessions was worth considering.

78. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) endorsed the comments made by the representatives of Zaire and France about the need to provide proper facilities for the work of UNEP and the Permanent Representative Committee in Nairobi. His delegation would like some clarification from the Secretariat of the statement, in the last sentence of paragraph 17.4 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7), that details concerning the trust funds enumerated in table 17.12 of the proposed programme budget could not be provided because they were administered and implemented by the Executive Director of UNEP. CPC had also referred to the problem of obtaining information from UNEP. He hoped that the Programme would in future pay greater attention to meeting the requirements of intergovernmental bodies. His delegation, like that of Kenya, could not support the recommendation in paragraph 17.9 of the Advisory Committee's report against approval of a new P-4 post. In that connection, it wondered if the Secretariat could give some indication as to how the consultancy firm which would assess the management and organization of UNEP would be selected.

79. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) said that her delegation also considered the proposed growth rate of 4.5 per cent in section 17 to be justified by the importance of UNEP and the need to protect the environment. It also shared the concern expressed by the representative of Kenya about the extent of the reliance on extrabudgetary resources under that section. The UNEP programme of work needed a sounder foundation than such resources could provide. On the question of the new P-4 post proposed in paragraph 17.46 of the proposed programme budget, her delegation agreed with the representatives of Kenya and Uganda and supported the proposal.

80. Mr. AL-ARIMI (Oman) endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Iran about the need to strengthen the UNEP regional office at Bahrain and to take every possible step to remedy the environmental damage resulting from the Gulf war.

81. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) said that his delegation attached particular importance to section 17 because of the impact of the Gulf war on Kuwait. It therefore endorsed the proposed increase in estimates under the section and supported the call for the reinforcement of the UNEP regional office at Bahrain.

82. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on section 17, as contained in paragraphs 260 to 265 of its report (A/46/16).

83. It was so decided.

84. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $13,785,900 under section 17 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 17 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

OTHER MATTERS

85. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Twelve States members of the European Community, said that they were concerned by delays in the issuance of Fifth Committee documentation and the non-issuance of various reports requested at previous sessions. Under agenda items 104, 105 and 115, in particular, certain reports requested had simply not appeared, while under agenda item 115 some documentation had been received very late. He proposed that reports should bear an indication of the date of submission by substantive departments rather than the date of issuance in all languages. The situation was such that it was difficult for delegations to function effectively in terms of improving the work at the Organization. While he appreciated the work of the Secretariat, it would obviously be more productive if documents were available in a timely manner. He trusted that the Secretariat would provide the Committee with a prompt indication of the status of its documentation.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.